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# Servant Leadership Revisited: διακονία, Masculinity and Martyrdom in Mark 10:42–45

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## Abstract

Mark 10:42–45 is a key text for discussions of ‘diakonia’ and the related ministry of ‘deacons’ in the church. This paper uses a gender-critical approach to analyse the text, in the course of which a new exegetical proposal is made. It is argued not only that this text makes a somewhat subversive proposal for leadership, but also that our understanding of it can be furthered by means of masculinities studies

## Keywords

diakonia – Gospel of Mark – servant leadership – masculinities studies – ministry – gender

## 1 Introduction

The aim of this essay to investigate Mark 10:42–45 from the point of view of the construction of masculinity, reading the text both in the light of new insights concerning the notion of διακονία and in the light of ancient understandings of masculinity. In doing so, a threefold aim will be served: (1) new exegetical light will be shed on this text, in particular in relation to its gendered character and to the colonial setting in which it is positioned; (2) a contribution will be made to the discourse on service and masculinity in an ecclesial context, in particular in relation to the sources that this discourse draws on; (3) gender-critical

reflection on 'servant leadership' will be furthered,<sup>1</sup> given that Mark 10:42–45 function in relation to this paradigm as well.<sup>2</sup> In particular, it will be argued that while the function of Mark 10:42–45 in historical perspective may well have been to (culturally subversively) masculinize suffering and service by interpreting it in the light of the (specific) honorable διακονία of laying down one's life of the Son of Man, in contemporary interpretations in the discourses on the diaconate and servant-leadership, the text's use can lead to hiding gendered imbalances in access to power and leadership behind a rhetoric of 'service'. In the process, particular attention will also be given to the question who is a δῆλονος to whom in this text.

For both 'secular' models of servant-leadership and ecclesial models of the diaconate, Mark 10:42–45, is a source of inspiration. Although Greenleaf's initial work that pioneered 'servant leadership' does not include references to this text,<sup>3</sup> it was soon picked up by other authors on the subject.<sup>4</sup> In the ecclesial discourse on diaconate and service, the text has always played a key role. In the latter context, the notion of διακονέω/διακονία has been thoroughly revisited, due to the work of scholars such as Collins and Hentschel, which, certainly in the case of Hentschel has also included attention to gendered aspects of concepts of service, such as an association of service with femininity.<sup>5</sup> This paper

- 1 Apparently, little feminist or otherwise gender critical research on 'servant leadership' exists, cf. Kae Reynolds, 'Servant-Leadership: A Feminist Perspective', *International Journal of Servant Leadership* 10 (2016).
- 2 Cf. for exegetical contributions that connect Mark 10:42–45 and servant leadership, e.g.: John C. Hutchison, 'Servanthood: Jesus' Countercultural Call to Christian Leaders', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (2009), pp. 53–69; Narry Santos, *Slave of All: The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), esp. pp. 198–209; John R. Donahue/Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), p. 316.
- 3 Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).
- 4 Cf. paradigmatically: Ken Blanchard/Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Times* (Nashville: Nelson, 2005), i.12.32.112. Eric Thurman, 'Looking for a Few Good Men: Mark and Masculinity', in Moore/Anderson (ed.), *Masculinities*, pp. 137–161, 154, refers to 'servant leadership' when discussing Mark 10:45.
- 5 Cf. Anni Hentschel, *Gemeinde, Ämter, Dienste. Perspektiven zur neutestamentlichen Ekklesiologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), pp. 19, 39. See also: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Der Dienst an den Tischen". Eine kritische feministisch-theologische Überlegung zum Thema Diakonie', *Concilium* 24 (1988), pp. 306–313, 311–312. See further Christina Schnabl, 'Solidarität. Ein sozioethischer Grundbegriff – genderethisch betrachtet', Michael

will reread the text, argue for a further nuancing of the new approach to it and, in doing so, relate it more tightly to notions of power and rule in the ancient world and to the question of gender, in particular of masculinity. For reading Mark in the context of the Roman imperial world and its dominant ideology, a convincing case has been made by Winn, whose work informs the current exegesis.<sup>6</sup> A strong argument for interpreting the text in its imperial context can be derived from the text itself, as Winn also notes: the explicit contrast between pagan and Markan leaders in v. 42.

On an metalevel, this paper also makes a contribution to scholarship exploring the relationship between institutions, gender, and the foundational narratives of such communities. As will become clear in the course of this contribution, these three mutually influence each other: what masculinity is, for instance, is partially determined by what a foundational narrative provides in terms of input, yet it is also shaped by its performance in a community.

## 2 From the Old to the New Consensus

The work of Collins,<sup>7</sup> followed by that of Hentschel,<sup>8</sup> has, as it is well known by now, led to a veritable paradigm shift in the interpretation of διακονέω/διακονία in early Christianity.<sup>9</sup> Leaving behind a paradigm in which lowly service, such as waiting on tables (cf. Acts 6; John 13), was the point of departure for the interpretation of this notion, new lexicographical research has led to a new paradigm, in which the idea that a διάκονος is someone executing a task on behalf of someone else, being sent by this person, is key. This has had at least two effects: (1) a broader spectrum of early Christian ministries can now be understood as ministries commissioned by Christ; (2) the 'lowly' character of such ministries has been relativized. Both of these effects also have consequences for the conceptualization of the 'diaconate' both ancient and modern.

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Krüggele/Stephanie Klein/Karl Gabriel (ed.), *Solidarität - ein christlicher Grundbegriff?: soziologische und theologische Perspektiven* (Zürich: TVZ, 2005), pp. 135–161.

6 Cf. Adam Winn, 'Tyrant or Servant? Roman Political Ideology and Mark 10.42–45', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36 (2014), pp. 325–352.

7 John N. Collins, *Diakonia. Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

8 Anni Hentschel, *Diakonia im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), referring to Dieter Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964), pp. 32–38, as an early instance of this 'new perspective'.

9 See also, e.g., Bart Koet, *Augustinus over diakens. Zijn visie op het diakonaat* (Almere: Parthenon, 2014).

This shift has had its impact on the interpretation of Mark 10:42–45 as well.<sup>10</sup> The text moved from being a paradigm of humble service ('servant leadership') to something else. With Hentschel, the text purports to indicate something quite different, i.e. Jesus has not come as a humble servant, but as a person who fulfills the task that God has given him, as an emissary of God; as someone who is faithful to God and executes faithfully what God commands, Jesus is an example for leaders in the community, who are not ruling autonomously, but only by commission of someone superior to them. Only loyalty vis-à-vis God can legitimize their role, not their own authority.<sup>11</sup> Also Collins has emphasized that the point of Mark 10:45 is not so much the lowly character of the Son of Man's behavior, but rather its contents in terms of executing his charge by laying down his life as a ransom for many – this is where he derives his ultimate dignity and value from, not from having many δῖακονοι.<sup>12</sup>

Interestingly, the gender angle of these developments has been explored only to a limited extent, i.e. the 'feminine' connotation of service has been addressed by Hentschel, noting both that the suggestion, in the old model, that service is typically feminine, is problematic, and also indicating that there is little 'typically feminine' in the meaning of διακονέω/διακονία in terms of acting on behalf of someone else.<sup>13</sup> What remains unexplored, however, is how this new understanding of διακονία is gendered. If not feminine or effeminate, might it be masculine, or yet something else? And if so, how? Prior to addressing this question, a few exegetical preliminaries need to be addressed, having to do with the question, 'Who is a δῖακονος to whom?' and with the broader religio-cultural positioning of the expressions in Mark 10:42–45.

### 3 Narrative and Contextual Observations

At this point, some observations on the narrative context of Mark 10:42–45 and the occurrence of some of the motifs in the text in the broader Graeco-Roman world (including the Jewish colonized subculture) are in order.

10 Cf., e.g., the overview provided by John N. Collins, *Diakonia Studies: Critical Issues in Ministry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 3–20.

11 Anni Hentschel, 'Dienen / Diener (NT)', <http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/47853/> (accessed 30 November 2016).

12 Collins, *Diakonia*, pp. 251–252.

13 See for problems with the 'old' paradigm, including gender and power, Hentschel, *Diakonia*, pp. 7–64.

First, the broader context Mark 10:42–45 is of significance, i.e. Mark 8:22–10:52. This segment of Mark contains three passion predictions, in 8:31, 9:31 (with a striking parallel to 10:43–44 in 9:35 and to 10:45 in 9:31) and in 10:33–34).<sup>14</sup> Mark 10:42 is furthermore part of the smaller section Mark 10:32–45, which is marked off by changes of place accompanied by changes of topic in vv. 32 and 46. This pericope can itself be subdivided into three sections, one dealing with a passion prediction (vv. 32–34), one with the request of James and John (vv. 35–40) and one dealing with Jesus' concluding teaching (vv. 41–45). The three sections are connected variously, principally through the topic of death and martyrdom. For the purposes of this essay one aspect of this topic is relevant in particular: the connection between the passion predication in v. 33 (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδοθήσεται τοῖς ἀρχιερεῦσιν καὶ τοῖς γραμματεῦσιν καὶ κατακρινούσιν αὐτὸν θανάτῳ καὶ παραδώσουσιν αὐτὸν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) and Jesus' saying about the Son of Man in v. 45 (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἤλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν). The relevance is twofold. (1) In both texts the (impending) death of the Son of Man is mentioned; this connects the two texts. (2) The two verses are quite distinct when it comes to describing the manner of this death. In v. 33, Mark uses passive tenses whenever the 'Son of Man' is subject of a verb and when others are the subject,<sup>15</sup> he is the object of their actions.<sup>16</sup> In v. 45, the reverse is the case,

14 Cf. Mark E. Moore, *Kenotic Politics: The Reconfiguration of Power in Jesus' Political Praxis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 63. See for the structure also Donahue/Harrington, *Mark*, p. 314, Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (Waco: Word, 2015), pp. 113–114.

15 Heinrich Baarlink, 'Jesu Leben, 'ein Lösegeld für viele' (Markus 10,45', in: idem, *Verkündigtes Heil: Studien zu den synoptischen Evangelien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), pp. 98–113, 109, elects to see the use of *passiva divina* here. The effect is to marginalize any suggestion of human agency and to turn the entire statement of v. 33 into one about God's own offering up of the Son of Man. Cf. Knut Backhaus, "'Lösepreis für viele" (Mk 10,45). Zur Heilsbedeutung des Todes Jesu bei Markus', in Thomas Söding (ed.), *Der Evangelist als Theologe. Studien zum Markusevangelium* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1995), pp. 91–118. 100–101, also uses the notion of the *passivum divinum* and sees a shift in agency in the Gospel of Mark, from God's 'dahingeben' of the Son of Man to Jesus' giving of himself. It is a beautiful theological image, but the sequential character hinges on seeing a *passivum divinum* in three instances (9:31; 10:33; 14:41). It would be preferable to do away with the use of this concept and to speak of a coinciding of divine commissioning and sending of the Son of Man and the Son of Man's active execution of this commission. The one who is sent to give himself up indeed gives himself up. On the *passivum divinum*, see: Peter-Ben Smit/Toon Renssen, 'The *passivum divinum*: The Rise and Future Fall of an Imaginary Linguistic Phenomenon', in: *Filología Neotestamentaria* 47 (2015), pp. 3–24.

16 Should Isa. 53:12LXX indeed be part of the background of Mark 10:45, then it is worth noting that there the fate of the servant is described in passive terms (διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸς

here the Son of Man is the subject of all the verbs; even his death is seen as his laying down of his life. While he does so on behalf of many in the latter verse, in v. 33 the Son of Man ends up as the possession of the 'gentiles'. Within the scope of a few verses two totally different representations of the Son of Man's, i.e. Jesus', death. The proximity of v. 33 to v. 45 will prove to be of interpretative significance later on.

Second, it can be observed concerning the narrative leading into Jesus' teaching that here the question of the two Zebedean brothers, which refers to their participation in a future glorious rule of Jesus, is answered by Jesus by shifting the focus of the conversation to matters of martyrdom and death. This pertains both to the reference to the cup and the baptism (vv. 38–39) and to the sitting at Jesus' right and left hands, given that whereas the two ask about sitting ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ εἰς ἐξ ἀριστερῶν (v. 37), Jesus responds by referring to sitting ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἢ ἐξ εὐωνύμων (v. 40), which is an expression that returns in the account of his crucifixion: καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο ληστὰς ἕνα ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἕνα ἐξ εὐωνύμων αὐτοῦ.<sup>17</sup> Whereas this provides a preparation of the statement in 10:45 concerning the Son of Man's death, it also offers a reinterpretation of what glory amounts to, which is also at the core of Jesus' teaching in vv. 42–44. In the process, the Markan Jesus also shifts the focus from future glory to the role of leaders in the community, thus making the discourse transparent for the Markan community and its office bearers.

A third observation concerns the occurrence of the contrast between rulers of the nations and the way it ought to be ἐν ὑμῖν. Of interest are the possible backgrounds to the rhetoric of ruling and serving there. Recent scholarship shows a tendency to avoid following the (seeming) lead of Markan rhetoric here and to pause to ask whether gentile leadership is in view is general, or just bad examples of it.<sup>18</sup> While there is no consensus concerning the provenance of the topics found here in Mark, three remarks can be made: (1) in Jewish

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κληρονομήσει πολλοὺς καὶ τῶν ἰσχυρῶν μεριεῖ σκῦλα ἀνθ' ὧν παρεδόθη εἰς θάνατον ἢ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη καὶ αὐτὸς ἁμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνήνεγκεν καὶ διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη), whereas Mark 10:45 states the fate of the Son of Man in active verbs. Cf. Yarbrow Collins, 'Signification', p. 372.

17 Cf. also Evans, *Mark*, p. 119.

18 This discussion is partially determined by the interpretation of the verbs κατακυριεύω and κατεξουσιάζω in relation to the more common forms κυριεύω and εξουσιάζω and whether the former two verbs represent intensified forms of the latter two, potentially signifying instances of tyranny and oppression. Cf., e.g., Winn, 'Tyrant', pp. 342–343, for an overview of the discussion. Whether one indeed thinks that tyranny is in view (as Winn himself does) or not, for the purposes of this paper the more important question is the structure of the relationship between those who are in charge and the communities involved. Even

circles the combination of leadership, service, and self-offering, to the extent of (expiatory, liberating) sacrifice on behalf of the people existed,<sup>19</sup> both with and without a direct relationship to Isa. 53;<sup>20</sup> (2) in non-Jewish texts, similar combinations can also be found, in particular in relation ideals concerning kings,<sup>21</sup> this also applies to the gift of one's life as a λύτρον.<sup>22</sup> (3) When considering Roman and affiliated political leadership in Mark, the two prime examples are Herod and Pilate, who both fail in their roles, notably in Mark 6 (Herod as host) and 15 (Pilate as judge).<sup>23</sup> The combination of these factors leads to an interpretative situation in which not gentile leadership as such, or in its ideal form, is at stake in v. 42, but its perversion, while both gentile and Jewish readers will be able to make sense of what follows, in particular in

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if no tyranny is involved, a relationship can still have the shape of 'ruling over' or 'being commissioned by' when it comes to leadership roles.

- 19 Cf., e.g., Jan Willem van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People. A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
- 20 The connection between the 'suffering servant' and Mark 10:42–45, in particular to v. 45 is a much debated question that cannot be addressed on its own here and which is also of secondary importance of the argument advanced here. Should there indeed be a direct connection between these two texts, then this would mainly reinforce what can be argued on the basis of a more general pattern of ideals concerning leadership, self-giving and service as well. For a survey the debate on scriptural backgrounds, including Isa. 53, and the Markan text, see for instance: J. Christopher Edwards, *The Ransom Logion in Mark and Matthew: Its Reception and Its Significance for the Study of the Gospels* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).
- 21 Cf. David Seeley, 'Rulership and Service in Mark 10:41–45', *Novum Testamentum* 35 (1993), pp. 234–250. Following Seeley, Matthew Thiessen, 'The Many for One or One for the Many? Reading Mark 10:45 in the Roman Empire', *Harvard Theological Review* 109 (2016), pp. 447–466, argues convincingly that Mark 10:45 can be understood against the backdrop of prevailing imperial ruler ideology, albeit it with a twist: in the case of Mark, the 'ruler' gives his life for the people, rather than that it is assumed that the people ought to give their lives for their king. Winn, 'Tyrant', p. 343, suggests that the (Roman) readers of Mark would be able to recognize themselves in the ideals of rulership outlined here.
- 22 Cf. Adela Yarbro Collins, 'The Signification of Mark 10:45 among Gentile Christians', *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997), pp. 371–382, with reference to actual liberation through manumission in relation to this term.
- 23 On the characterization of Herod and Pilate, see Adam Winn, "'Their Great Ones act as Tyrants over them'. Mark's Characterization of Roman Authorities from a Distinctly Roman Perspective', in Christopher W. Skinner/Matthew Ryan Hauge (ed.), *Character Studies and the Gospel of Mark* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 194–214. For the suggestion that Herod and Pilate are in view here, see: Alberto De Mingo Kaminouchi, *But It Is Not So Among You. Echoes of Power in Mark 10.32–45* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), p. 207, commenting in particular on the οἱ δοκοῦντες ἀρχεῖν in v. 42.



terms of ideal-typical leadership.<sup>24</sup> Common to the two, Jewish and gentile, discourses of leadership is – and for this the shift in agency between v. 33 and v. 45 is of significance! – that believable, even ideal-typical leadership is such that it consists of *intentional* service on behalf of and for the benefit of the community.

#### 4 Who is a διάκονος to whom?

In most literature, Mark 10:42–45 is interpreted in such a manner that the injunction in v. 43 that whoever wants to be great ‘among you’ has to be a servant (ὅς ἂν θέλῃ μέγας γενέσθαι ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται ὑμῶν διάκονος), followed up in v. 44 by the parallel statement that whoever wants to rank first ‘among you’ needs to be the slave of all (ὅς ἂν θέλῃ ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι πρῶτος ἔσται πάντων δοῦλος), refers to a ‘Christ-like’ attitude among the community leaders (past and present). Mark 10:42–45 is thus read as suggesting that leaders in a community are acting on behalf of Jesus and therefore ought to behave like a proper διάκονος or δοῦλος, i.e. a διάκονος commissioned by Jesus and acting on Jesus’ behalf or as a δοῦλος of Jesus. This argument is often supported by Jesus’ commissioning of his disciples to perform tasks for him throughout the Gospel of Mark.<sup>25</sup> Yet, it is worthwhile to explore this question further, given that it is not necessarily as clear as this who is a διάκονος or δοῦλος to whom.

To begin with it must be noted concerning the Son of Man in v. 45 that both the question on behalf of whom he exercises a διακονία and the question as to who its precise beneficiaries are, at least in as far as it concerns an object for the verb διακονέω in vs. 45, seem to be open, in particular because no one is mentioned (e.g. by means of a subjective or objective genitive). Of course, it is likely that the idea is that διακονία is exercised on behalf of God and for the benefit of the πολλοί. Another possibility would be that the (missing) object or subject would, in fact, be the same person: a service commissioned by God and exercised for God, with the ‘many’ as collateral beneficiaries. This would come close to (mentally) inserting a genitive θεοῦ here in which objective and subjective meanings coincide in a somewhat ambiguous manner. In the end, exegetical rather than grammatical considerations are needed to help resolve

24 The use of a negative example about the ‘other’ can also function as a rhetorical ploy: as the Markan community may well have distanced itself from ‘pagan’ practices at large, the last thing that its leadership would want is to be seen as ‘typically pagan’ leaders.

25 Cf. Hentschel, *Gemeinde*, pp. 170–230, for an overview of the commissioning and sending out of the disciples as part of their *Nachfolge*.

the issue.<sup>26</sup> One such consideration would be that the ambiguity can well be dissolved by emphasizing an interpretation of the καί in the latter part of Mark 10:45 (καί δοῦναι ...), as a καί *epexegeticum*.<sup>27</sup> This would turn the act of giving one's life for many into the content of the execution of the commission indicated by διακονέω. Thus, the 'many' are not the ones on whose behalf the Son of Man acts as a διάκονος or the one's vis-à-vis he exercises his commission, but rather God's commissioning of the Son of Man has as its content giving one's life for the many in terms of a ransom (presumably in terms of Gen. 9:6; Exod. 24:8 and Zech. 9:11–12).<sup>28</sup> God would, therefore, be indeed be both subject and object of the διακονία of the Son of Man. The statement about the Son of Man in v. 45, which serves as an *exemplum* to back up Jesus' preceding teaching, has, accordingly, two key components:<sup>29</sup> (1) the presentation of an authoritative instance of an existence dedicated to acting on behalf of a higher authority, in the case of the *exemplum*: God; (2) the contents of that existence: giving one's life for others. Both (1) and (2) constitute points of departure for a comparison with other cases of leadership and διακονία.

Concerning (1), two main options exist: (a) comparison with a focus on acting on behalf of God; (b) comparison with a focus on acting on behalf of a higher authority in general. For two reasons, the latter option is by far the most attractive. The reasons for this are twofold. (1) In the majority of cases in which διάκονος occurs with a genitive, this genitive indicates the person or institution on behalf of which someone acts. The Jewish, Christian and 'pagan' materials surveyed by Collins and Hentschel indicate this.<sup>30</sup> The beneficiaries of someone acting on behalf of someone else are frequently indicated either through a construction with a preposition or by means of a dative (genitives occur incidentally only).<sup>31</sup> (2) In this manner it is much easier to make sense of the use of the term δοῦλος in relation to πρῶτος in v. 44: these two terms express a hierarchy, which is exactly what would be there should the genitive ὑμῶν in v. 43 express on behalf of whom one who wishes to be 'great' is to be a διάκονος. It also agrees with the use of δοῦλος with a genitive, which usually expresses a

26 Following J.H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), p. 72.

27 Cf. also Hentschel, *Gemeinde*, p. 185; Collins, *Diakonia Studies*, pp. 82–83.

28 See for a convincing interpretation: Cilliers Breytenbach, 'Narrating the Death of Jesus in Mark: Utterances of the Main Character, Jesus', *ZNW* 105 (2014), pp. 153–168, esp. 165–166.

29 On the theory and use of *exempla* in the first century CE, cf. Peter-Ben Smit, *Paradigms of Being in Christ* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 16–30.

30 Cf. Collins, *Diakonia*, pp. 73–243, Hentschel, *Diakonia*, pp. 34–89.

31 See for examples, e.g. Hentschel, *Gemeinde*, p. 189n481.

relationship of ownership, irrespective of whether someone is a slave of God (cf. the LSJ entry). As both ὑμῶν and πάντων are plurals and as it concerns in both in v. 43 and v. 44 ἐν ὑμῖν, i.e., in the community, the most likely referent is the community, not God, Christ, or both. Furthermore, when the statements about being ὑμῶν διάκονος and πάντων δοῦλος have parallel meanings with a καὶ epexegeticum connecting them, then the (unclear) first statement should be read in the light of the (clearer) second one. Both being a slave happens, therefore, in relation to the community and also enacting a role as διάκονος. However hyperbolic the expression may be here, it does indicate, together with what precedes it in v. 43 that the 'first' and 'great' in the Markan community are to act on behalf of the community, just as the Son of Man acted on behalf of God.

These considerations find support in Mk. 9:35, a parallel to 10:45: εἴ τις θέλει πρῶτος εἶναι ἔσται πάντων ἔσχατος καὶ πάντων διάκονος. Here, it commends itself to read both genitives as relational genitives, expressing that whoever wants to be first needs to be the last in relation to all and to be the διάκονος in relation to all. This use of the genitive suggests that the disciples, here admonished for their arguing as to who is the greater one among them (v. 34), are also instructed to act on behalf of the community (and in its service). There is no suggestion here of acting on behalf of God, which reinforces the impression that the *tertium comparationis* between Mark 10:45 and the verses preceding it is the notion of acting on behalf of others as such, rather than acting on behalf of God in particular.

Concerning the second possible point of comparison, it would seem that the connection is looser than in the case of the first point of comparison. This is to say that whereas there is little suggestion in the Gospel of Mark that the disciples are to lay down their lives as λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν – that is only the Son of Man's διακονία – the context does suggest that they will die as part of their discipleship, given Jesus' words in v. 39: τὸ ποτήριον ὃ ἐγὼ πίνω πίεσθε καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθήσεσθε. Even though Mark's Gospel does not contain an explicit equation of baptism with execution or the like, the chalice in Mark 14:36 is clearly a metaphor for Jesus' impending fate.

Thus, when returning to the main question of this section: Jesus' instruction pertains to pre-eminence and greatness finding their expression in acting on behalf of the community, rather than positioning oneself over it. For those living as pre-eminent and 'great' members of the community, the community occupies, structurally speaking, the place that God has in the relationship between God and the Son of Man. In other words, the pre-eminent members of the community are not *directly* διάκονοι θεοῦ, rather they are this indirectly: by being διάκονοι τῆς ἐκκλησίας (θεοῦ), or, in the words of Mark: πάντων.

Accordingly, the most viable exegetical option is to posit that the 'great' and 'first' in the community addressed by the Markan gospel should consider themselves as servants of the community. This fully agrees with the introductory remark of Jesus in v. 42 concerning the authority of rulers of the 'gentiles' and the manner in which these 'lord it over them', paralleled by Jesus' subsequent statement that 'their high officials exercise authority over them' (NRSV). In the equally parallel formulated statement by Jesus (vv. 43–44), the (contrasting) position of the great and pre-eminent ones in the Markan community is delineated. Nowhere it is suggested that gentile authorities are acting on behalf of a higher authority (e.g. the emperor, a deity, etc.). This is another reason to think that acting as a διάκονος (or δοῦλος) on behalf of the community is at the core of what the Markan Jesus has to say here. This agrees with the observation that the point of contrast between 'gentile' leadership and leadership 'in Christ' is a leader's attitude vis-à-vis the community; acting on behalf of a higher authority does not play a role in both case and can, therefore, not be the key point of comparison. Following Markan vocabulary, the contrast is between self-positioning as κύριος or as someone endowed with ἐξουσία (cf. v. 42: κατακυριεύω, κατεξουσιάζω) and as someone who is a διάκονος or δοῦλος of the community. The 'gentile' model positions the leader over the community; the Markan model positions the community over the leader. Verse 45 substantiates this model of 'diaconal' leadership, i.e. acting on behalf of someone else, by using the paradigm of the Son of Man. From this follows that acting on behalf of someone else, i.e. as διάκονος, is fitting for the 'great' and 'first' in the Markan context, given this example, but it does not follow that the leaders addressed by the statement are acting directly on God's behalf and for the benefit of 'many', like the Son of Man; only the notion that 'acting on behalf of others' is appropriate behavior is substantiated in this manner. Jesus employs a line of reasoning that can be characterized as 'a maiore ad minus': if it was appropriate for the Son of Man to act on behalf of someone else, then it would certainly be appropriate for lesser figures to do so. The resulting Markan paradigm of leadership in the community is leadership on behalf of, commissioned by the community, rather than leadership that subordinates the community to itself. God, or divine authority, as it is implied in v. 45, would in all of this be mediated through the community.<sup>32</sup> This interpretation of Mark 10:42–45 retains the new interpretation of διακονία, but gives a different answer to the question

32 The line of thought presented in this section was developed in the biblical theology class taught in the winter term of 2016/2017 at the Old Catholic Seminary, Utrecht; discussion with the Anne Miedema and David Ross, both participating in the class, helped to develop it in particular.

who is exercising a *διακονία* on behalf of whom according to Jesus's statement in vv. 43–45.

This exegetical position also leads to an accentuating of the question how such leadership and authority may have been understood as a position of authority. In order to explore this, the interface of masculinity and leadership will be used as a lens, both to magnify the problem and to provide a vantage point for analyzing it.

## 5 Ancient Masculinity and *διακονία*

When following the shift in interpretation of *διακονία* as just outlined, considerations about the gendered nature of this concept can also be formulated. In the old model, it would seem, service is gendered feminine, given that it has to do with submission, being at the disposal of others and performing low status work. Waiting at tables or washing someone's feet is no work for a real man, who is in control of himself and who exercises power over others. Accordingly, slaves, as the typical performers of such service, were not likely to be gendered masculine, at least not according to the dominant gender paradigms in the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>33</sup> Contemporary ministries based on this notion of *διακονία* were, therefore, also gendered feminine and, accordingly, frequently thought to be eminently suitable for women (the *Diakonissinnenbewegung* is a case in point).<sup>34</sup> The new model, however, is more complicated.

Various overviews of the characteristics of 'hegemonic' masculinity in antiquity are available; Mayordomo's is particularly helpful.<sup>35</sup> He distinguishes seven aspects of hegemonic masculinity: (1) The conventional Graeco-Roman view of gender, sex, and body was that in reality only a 'monosexual' body existed that could manifest itself as (more) masculine or (more) feminine through genitals that had either grown outwardly or inwardly. (2) Masculinity was not necessarily a fact determined by the body with which one was born, but needed to be proved constantly in the public arena, through one's appearance, behaviour, and performance. Everyone could constantly become more or

33 For a survey, see: Peter-Ben Smit, *Masculinity and the Bible – Survey, Models, and Perspectives*, Brill Research Perspectives in Biblical Studies (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

34 See, for instance, Hentschel, *Ämter*, p. 19. To wit, it may also be the case that 'dirty' work with little social esteem, such as working among the poor, was given esteem through its association with the imitation of Christ.

35 See Moisés Mayordomo-Marín, 'Constructions of Masculinity in Antiquity and Early Christianity', *Lectio Difficilior* 2006:2.

less masculine. (3) Masculinity was very closely bound up with the notions of activity and dominance.<sup>36</sup> (4) Masculinity and virtue were closely intertwined, both through the cardinal virtue of ἀνδρεία and through the virtues in general (*virtutes*). (5) Self-control was an essential part of the aforementioned exercise of power and control.<sup>37</sup> (6) This state of affairs also meant that, *sensu stricto*, no one was really born as a man, but that even a boy needed to be educated and trained to be a man. (7) Finally, masculinity and femininity were both associated with respective social spaces, i.e. outside and inside, or: public and private. Being masculine in relation to these characteristics was a process of constant negotiation, especially if one occupied a less than elite position in society. Also 'subhegemonic' groups in society did attempt to negotiate their own views of masculinity, as did philosophical schools, such as the Stoics and the Cynics.<sup>38</sup>

When positioning the issue of acting as commissioned by someone else on the map of ancient gender ideologies, some aspects stand out. First, the aspect of being in the service of someone else and therefore not fully in control of oneself. Second, given that the person that one represents may well be of very high status and the fact that such status and authority was represented also by an emissary, a δῖάκονος' influence over others could well be substantial (cf., e.g., Paul's attitude as a δῖάκονος of Christ).<sup>39</sup> Third, being in the service of a deity, or serving a deity by executing the deity's mission, could well be constructed as piety, which would be a characteristic of ideal-typical masculine identity.<sup>40</sup> Although such piety usually means giving up part of one's absolute autonomy or autarky, it also means associating with the most powerful patron imaginable. Fourth, when considering the voluntary performance of lowly tasks in order to honor someone, e.g. a host personally serving his guests instead of having a servant do this, the interplay of agency and service makes it difficult to classify it as unmasculine. The interplay between the third and fourth elements causes ambiguities in the particular: devotion to a particular deity, such as to Christ, is not always a voluntary matter, yet, simultaneously, a figure of Paul will act intentionally and voluntarily on the basis of having been drawn into the devotion of his κύριος; this also includes his agency as a δῖάκονος of Christ. If the

36 Mayordomo, 'Construction', p. 7.

37 Mayordomo, 'Construction', p. 8.

38 On which, see, e.g., Brittany Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 24–25.

39 Cf. Hentschel, *Diakonia*, pp. 90–184.

40 Cf., e.g., Stephen D. Moore, 'Masculinity Studies and the Bible', in Julia O'Brien (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014), pp. 540–547, 541. Similar: Susan E. Haddox, *Metaphor and Masculinity in Hosea* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

new concept of διακονία can be positioned in this way on the ancient map of gender, in particular that of masculinity, a vantage point has also been found for the interpretation of Mark 10:42–45.

## 6 Mark 10:42–45 and Masculinity

In research on masculinity and the New Testament, some attention has been given to Mark 10:42–45, but the text has not been analyzed in its own right.<sup>41</sup> For instance, in her landmark *Behold, the Man*, Conway has commented on v. 45, noting that the reticence of the Markan Jesus when it comes to exercising power suits Graeco-Roman models of masculinity, such as the one provided by Augustus in his *Res Gestae*.<sup>42</sup> Also the facts that Jesus' suffering and death are divinely willed (cf. Mark 8:31, δεῖ) and has a redemptive quality 'fit the category of a noble, vicarious, manly death'.<sup>43</sup> Mayordomo, in a survey of Jesus' masculinity in Mark, has also considered the text, arguing that Mark presents his reader with 'Sklavendienst als Lebensmodell', which goes against masculine ideals such as exercising power and having authority; owing to the fact that διακονέω is in Mark 1:31 also used for the behavior of Peter's mother-in-law, the model presented in Mark 10:45 is also accessible to women and not male-only, which is potentially subversive.<sup>44</sup> In Liew's earlier study of Markan constructions of masculinity,<sup>45</sup> Mark 10:45 is not discussed separately, but he does note that Markan masculinity is constructed in contradistinction to Gentile masculinities in the preceding verses, while lusting for honor is characterized

41 The 2016 doctoral dissertation of Susanna Asikainen, 'Jesus and Other Men: Ideal Masculinities in the Synoptic Gospels' (University of Helsinki) was not accessible to me.

42 Colleen M. Conway, *Behold, the Man. Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 95.

43 Conway, *Behold*, p. 96. Winn, 'Tyrant', pp. 345–348, underlines parallels between Mark's presentation of leadership and imperial ideologies of leadership, in particular in relation to *recusatio*, arguing that Mark here radicalizes these ideas by pressing them to the point of not just sacrificing titles and honor, as it were, but even one's life and this not just as an ideal, but in actual fact.

44 Moises Mayordomo, 'Jesu Männlichkeit im Markusevangelium: eine Spurensuche', in: Ute E. Eisen/Christine Gerber/Angela Standhartinger (ed.), *Doing gender -- doing religion: Fallstudien zur Intersektionalität im frühen Judentum, Christentum und Islam* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), pp. 359–379, 371.

45 Tat-siong Benny Liew, 'Re-Mark-able Masculinities: Jesus, the Son of Man, and the (Sad) Sum of Manhood?', in Stephen D. Moore/Janice Capel Anderson (ed.), *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), pp. 93–135.

there and elsewhere as foreign effeminacy.<sup>46</sup> Liew also notes the connection between masculinity and martyrdom in this section of Mark.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, he indicates that Markan masculinity is paradoxical in a number of ways, especially when it comes to a simultaneous emphasis on self-control on the part of Jesus and on God's supreme control, also of Jesus.<sup>48</sup> Finally, he argues that Mark retains an hierarchical notion of masculinity.<sup>49</sup> In Thurman's contribution to the discussion,<sup>50</sup> much emphasis is placed in particular on the possibilities of carving out a 'space' for what one might call alternative masculinities in the context of empire. Thurman provides examples concerning Cynic and Stoic masculinities and outlines how, through 'mimicry' (Bhabha), Mark reproduces colonial masculinities, but with a subversive twist.<sup>51</sup> The result is a destabilized masculinity that is open to transformation.

When it comes to Mark 10:42–45 and its gendered character, the situation is multi-layered. The reason for this is that the text does more than only make a statement about διακονία. In fact, the text uses the concept of διακονέω to interpret something else 'behind it': Jesus' death. This death constitutes the background of the *logion* in v. 45, as is obvious from the narrative context (passion prediction!). As such, that is already of interest from the perspective of gender, given that death by crucifixion or execution as such, was also a particularly emasculating way to die – quite unlike an honorable death on the battlefield, in many ways the ideal way to go for a 'real man'.<sup>52</sup> This rhetorical situation already ought to make one wary of a strongly 'feminizing' interpretation of Jesus' statements: what would be gained by interpreting one humiliating and emasculating situation in such a manner that the result would be an interpretation that suffered from the same drawbacks? Conversely, this situation also encourages one to mine the new interpretation of Mark 10:42–45, as presented and adapted slightly above, with regard to the way in which it interprets the death of Jesus (and his followers) in terms of gender, in particular of masculinity. Such attempts are also encouraged by the fact that the terms 'great' and 'first' are not refuted as such, nor is the honorific title 'Son of Man' done away with: giving one's life and being a δοῦλος or διάκονος in the community is done

46 Liew, 'Masculinities', pp. 113–114.118.

47 Liew, 'Masculinities', pp. 125–127.

48 Liew, 'Masculinities', pp. 129–130.

49 Liew, 'Masculinities', pp. 130–131.

50 Thurman, 'Looking'.

51 Cf. Thurman, 'Looking', pp. 142–144.155–157.159.

52 Cf. Mayordomo, 'Constructions'. See also Thurman, 'Looking', pp. 143–144.155–157 on alternative models.



as Son of Man and as someone who is 'great' or 'first' (terminology that is likely to reflect indications of offices in the community).

In what follows, it will be argued that the intercultural perspective on leadership and authority that is apparent from vv. 43–44 (given the contrasts gentiles/'you') is also needed to make sense of Jesus' statement about the Son of Man in v. 45, which in turn serves to substantiate the fitting and honorific self-positioning as διάκονος or δοῦλος of the community rather than as κύριος or someone who has ἐξουσία and who is the community's 'boss', as it were. Through this process of interpretation, authority and seeming non-authority are balanced in such a manner that the authority of the 'great' and the 'first' in the community is reconceptualized in a qualitative manner, while their position is underlined as one that is characterized by being commissioned by the community and acting on its behalf.

To begin with, in v. 45 considerable reinterpretation of Jesus' crucifixion takes place. Assuming that Jesus' own crucifixion is the historical referent of what the Markan Jesus refers to here in the third person singular as the Son of Man's δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν, it constitutes a subversive interpretation of what a crucifixion amounted to, differing significantly from the general view of it in the Graeco-Roman world: an elaborate way of executing someone who had threatened the social order (e.g. through insurrection, or by running away as a slave).<sup>53</sup> As soon as the terminology of the 'noble death', i.e. giving one's own life on behalf of another is used in order to interpret a crucifixion, then the notion of crucifixion is turned on its head. What should be a demonstration of boundless imperial power inflicted upon a passive, defenceless (and effeminate) victim, now becomes the exercise of power by the crucified person himself, for the benefit of others, in control of himself and acting intentionally.<sup>54</sup> Conway has shown how this impacts the masculinity of the Markan Jesus in positively. In this way, Mark presents Jesus, *qua* the Son of Man as an honorable, courageous and virile man. This honorable man has a further characteristic: he has not come to be served, but to serve by giving his life as a ransom for many. As argued above, the giving of the life is the

53 On crucifixion and its role in the Graeco-Roman world, see: David W. Chapman, *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010); Gunnar Samuelsson, *Crucifixion in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebek, 2013); John Granger Cook, *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

54 Cf. Van Henten, *Martyrs*, for the cultural background. Cf. also Camille Focant, *L'évangile selon Marc* (Paris: CERF, 2004), p. 427, who underlines the intentionality expressed through the construction ἤλθεν διακονηθῆναι. See also Thurman, 'Looking', pp. 155–157, on Cynic masculinity and voluntary submission and slavery.

content of the service or commission performed by the Son of Man. Because of this, serving, i.e. acting on behalf of someone else, likely God in this case, is now elevated to a very honorable and masculine plan, to the extent that it may have carried less than honorable connotations. Acting on behalf of others is interpreted in terms of something very masculine: giving one's own life intentionally for the benefit of others and dying a noble death. To appreciate this, a reader needs to know not just the dynamics of *διακονία* and its more and less honorable aspects, but also the interpretative *tour de force* that the Markan Jesus achieves here by reinterpreting the manner of his own death in terms of martyrdom and *διακονία*, thereby placing it at the level of virile and honourable behavior and giving *διακονία* the same connotation. A double, intercultural perspective is needed, both that of the outsider, knowing what a crucifixion is in the eyes of the 'world' and of the insider, knowing what Jesus' crucifixion really amounted to.

It is this kind of thinking that substantiates Jesus' argument in vv. 43–44. As was established, *διακονία* is there the term that links being the 'first' or being 'great' in the community with acting on behalf of the community. As v. 42 indicates, with the reference to the behavior of gentile lords and authorities, this concept of leadership is, at least to the (likely largely ex-gentile) audience presupposed by the author of the Gospel of Mark,<sup>55</sup> not self-explanatory. A key reason for such 'gentile' reluctance vis-à-vis the concept of leadership set forth by Mark('s Jesus) is that it might entail a loss of autonomy and agency, central characteristics of what made up an hegemonic Graeco-Roman man by most standards. Acting on behalf of someone else reduces someone's autonomy and freedom, i.e. control over oneself, as independent agency would. Mark's ways of negotiating this conundrum consists of a reinterpretation of acting on behalf of others, specifically of the community, by analogy to the Son of Man's acting on behalf of others. This acting on behalf of someone else is, given the status of the Son of Man and the authoritative character of his *exemplum*, a kind of behavior that has high status, not just because of the force of the *exemplum* behind it, but also because it is presented as *intentional* acting on behalf of others. The Markan 'first' and 'great' are invited to hold together the notion of acting on behalf of someone else and high status, by associating it, through the pen of Mark and his representation of the words of Jesus, with both a high status precursor, i.e. the Son of Man, who also acted on behalf of someone else and with intentionality: this kind of behavior is intentional, not some stroke

55 If the audience indeed consists of gentile converts, who are likely to emphatically not identify with their former background, the use of gentile behavior as a negative mirror might be particularly effective rhetorically.

of bad luck that has placed a person in a position of dependence. This intentionality is also present in the *exemplum* of the Son of Man. This same *exemplum* serves to turn societal norms on their head: given that the Son of Man's behaviour is authoritative, acting in a manner analogous to the Son of Man is what really leads to authentic 'greatness' in the community (assuming a line of thought *a maiore ad minus*), precisely through acting on its behalf. Although it is beyond the scope of this particular paper, one might well imagine that this kind of self-positioning agreed well with euergetic attitudes, prevalent among the affluent members of Graeco-Roman society, posing as δῖάκονοι, as it were, of their clients (as Hentschel has shown), whereas it may well be the case that these clients were expected to act in a manner that agreed with the way in which their patrons chose to act on their behalf.

As the *logion* in Mark 10:45 is used as an *exemplum*, it is by no means certain that it is used as it was originally coined, assuming that the current context is secondary.<sup>56</sup> In fact, it seems likely that, as any canonical text that is re-used in a new situation, it is now given a new use and meaning. If the *logion* did circulate in an independent form, its likely function was to make sense of Jesus' death in a positive manner, if it was created in order to suite the discussion between Jesus and his disciples in Mark 10:35–45, then it is at least heavily dependent on such traditions. Either way, as part of the 'canonical memory' of the Markan community – in the sense of being part of the Jesus tradition that it received and transmitted as authoritative – its meaning is also developed in the process of its transmission. Canonical texts can only function as such if they are capable of producing new meanings in new contexts.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, any 'return to the sources' usually leads to reading and understanding these sources in a manner in which they may well have been understood before; it is a creative move, in other words, not a conservative one. In the case of Mark 10:45, it seems likely that a dispute about leadership in the Markan community gave rise to discovering this *logion* in relation to matters of leadership and, accordingly, gender. Thus, a text originally intended to turn Jesus from a hapless (and unmanly) 'loser' into an intentional, manly martyr. But now the walk of life of Jesus, as subversively summarized in the *logion*, now also provides a model for a kind of leadership that is subversive in nature, given that it undermines

56 For tradition-historical considerations, cf., e.g., (still) the concise overview of Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* 11 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), pp. 164–165, and Edwards, *Ransom*, pp. 19–25.

57 See on the dynamics of the interpretation of canonical texts: Peter-Ben Smit, *From Canonical Criticism to Ecumenical Exegesis? A Study in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Leiden: Brill: 2015).

(potential) patterns of leadership by arguing that not their form and content, but the form and content of the life of the Son of Man is truly authoritative.

## 7 Results: Markan Subversively Subservient Masculinity in Postcolonial Perspective

When concluding on the above, the image of the Markan 'first' and 'great' that emerges is one that is subversively gendered. Furthermore, its force and subversive character can only be appreciated fully when both the 'inside' and 'outside' perspectives on leadership and acting on behalf of others, to the extent that one lays down one's life for them, are taken into account. Such subversive reinterpretations of events and symbols took place more frequently in the Roman empire, especially at the hands of minority groups that sought to carve out their own 'space' under the radar of the dominant societal discourse. For this reason, Scott's notion of 'hidden transcripts' is useful, given that it encapsulates precisely the dependence of hidden, subversive transcripts on dominant, public transcripts of order, hierarchy and appertaining behavior, and outlines how they serve to create a hidden, subversive space for an alternative order, which can be imagined and enacted in the space that is thus created (i.e. through imagination and enactment itself).<sup>58</sup> Cultural hybridity, in the sense of participating both in the public and hidden communities of society at large and in the Markan community of Christ's devotees, is a prerequisite for the development of such transcripts. In the Markan discourse on leadership, such hybridity and such interaction between the public and hidden discourses are quite obvious, given the contrast between gentile and Markan models of leadership in v. 42 and the appeal to the particular tradition of the Markan community in v. 45. All of this pertains to the following points in particular.

- (1) Public leadership is characterized by exercising authority on behalf of others; acting on behalf of others not considered the most authoritative kind of masculinity.
- (2) Such public leadership is denoted masculine; even if being a δῆκονος is not a feminine task *per se*, it does imply a lesser extent of autonomy and therefore a lesser degree of masculinity.

<sup>58</sup> Cf., e.g., Richard A. Horsley (ed.), *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul* (Atlanta: SBL, 2004), for its use in New Testament studies.

- (3) In the Markan community, ideal-typical leadership consists of acting on behalf of the community and in its service.
- (4) The leadership in the Markan community is nonetheless denoted masculine, for two reasons in particular (a) it is an intentional form of *διακονία*, akin to hosts serving tables themselves, thus autonomy and self-control are retained; (b) it is *διακονία* following the authoritative example of the Son of Man, who, as a martyr, represents hypermasculinity.<sup>59</sup>

In this way, Mark achieves a subversive combination of *διακονία* and masculinity, by combining the two through an emphasis on intentionality and the use of a noble martyr as *exemplum*. At first sight, from an 'outside' perspective, such leadership may seem to be less than credible or masculine. When taking a closer look, however, it appears to live up to standards that are recognizable from the inside perspective of the community, while also being understandable from an outsider's perspective: intentionality, self-control, and martyrdom were generally recognized values in the Graeco-Roman world, even if it did not recognize the Son of Man as authoritative as such (or his crucifixion as martyrdom). The construction of masculinity that Mark arrives at in this manner is one according to which real men can die on a cross. Intriguingly, Mark achieves this while remaining in touch with Graeco-Roman ideals of leadership and self-offering in terms of martyrdom.<sup>60</sup> Also, in Mark 'first' and 'great' are retained as titles, hierarchies are not dismantled, but interpreted and ordered anew, the gendering remains the same, but, as various female instances of *διακονία* in Mark show (1:31; 15:41), fulfilling the role of *διάκονος* is not a prerogative for those who are biologically male. If (even) the crucified Jesus can be understood as God's *διάκονος* par excellence, then this role remains gendered masculine, but in such a way that it becomes open for performance by all who, at first sight, would not be recognizable as masculine, or as hegemonic men. Such status, however, derives from acting on behalf of God (in the case of Jesus) or the community (in the case of Markan leadership), potentially to the end of offering oneself up. This is open to all.<sup>61</sup>

59 This is what Thurman, 'Looking', p. 160, calls the 'valorization of the unmanly slave'.

60 Cf. Winn, 'Tyrant', p. 348, arguing that Mark pushes the leadership and rulership ideals from the world around him to their (legitimate) extremes and thus can make the successful Jesus of the first half of his Gospel cohere with the crucified one of the second half, even in such a manner that this Jesus' embodiment of leadership trumps that of most emperors.

61 Cf. for a very early instance of masculist criticism with similar results: Ched Meyers, *Binding the Strong Man* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), pp. 277–281.

## 8 Conclusions: Servant Leadership and Gender – A Second Look

When returning to the notion of servant leadership, a number of observations can be made regarding ‘servant leadership’ and gender in Mark 10:42–45. To begin with, the gendering of leadership does not alter, even if its structure does. Leadership remains gendered masculine, which, to be sure, does not say anything decisive about the sex of those exercising it (cf., e.g., Mark 15:40–41, where three named women are said to have followed Jesus and performed tasks on his behalf; the juxtaposition of ‘servant leadership’ and the example of a child in Mark 9:35–36 is also suggestive; in Mark 10:42–45, Jesus likely addresses his male disciples). Yet, what changes fundamentally is what sort of leadership can be gendered as (hegemonic) masculine: it now includes kinds of leadership that are not fully autonomous, but have the structure of the exercise of a *διακονία*. A certain amount of ‘passivity’ is incorporated into what is normative behaviour for the Markan community and its (leading) members.

At the same time, the Markan account of leadership, both in 10:42–45 and in 9:35 retains notions of order and hierarchy: notions such as ‘great’ or ‘first’ are retained, not abolished.<sup>62</sup> They are, to be sure, reinterpreted, but they do remain in place. A person acting as the *πρῶτος* of a community has to do so by acting on behalf of the community, but is nonetheless functioning as its *πρῶτος* and representing the community. Formally, the community has the higher authority, but it seems that the *πρῶτος* acts on its behalf, possibly as a plenipotentiary and certainly does so in a personal way, thereby wielding substantial power and exercising substantial influence. Transformation and reinterpretation are the dynamics at work here, not abolition or the fiction of a totally discontinuous new start in terms of an absence of power and leadership or the like.

Comparing this picture to the (Christian but also general) discourse of servant leadership, would mean underscoring that the word ‘leader’ has not disappeared from the concept, even if it is being interpreted by means of the notion of ‘servant’. Notions of hierarchy and status do not disappear, in other words, and power and influence remain associated with the exercise of ‘servant leadership’ owing to its being leadership at the core – this despite the potentially masking effect of the adjective ‘servant’. For the gendering of such leadership,

62 Cf. also Hentschel, *Gemeinde*, pp. 185–189, esp. 185; diff. Collins, e.g., in *Diakonia Studies*, p. 86: ‘discipleship functions at a level where power does not exist’. This does not seem to agree with the data of the Markan text. See further also Winn, ‘Tyrant’, p. 341, who notes that positions of power or leadership are not questioned as such, just their ordering and use, which also applies to Hutchison, ‘Servanthood’, p. 69.

a comparison with Mark 10:42–45 may also be illuminating: it seems likely that, although ‘servant leadership’ may sound like a ‘soft’, maybe even ‘feminine’ kind of leadership, its actual exercise of power, its association with efficiency and success, as well as its original drawing on the examples of key world leaders from the past,<sup>63</sup> its gendering is likely to be masculine, at least when following the cultural stereotypes of many societies. Again, this does not say anything decisive about the sex of those exercising it, but it is useful to take into account, as it might make someone somewhat more cautious concerning the potentially gender equalizing functions of the notion ‘servant leadership’. Yet, when pushing this somewhat further, it also appears that the paradigm of Mark 10:45 also suggests that leadership is acting on behalf of a community, as its agent. This means that any kind of ‘servant leadership’ that hides the exercise of power behind the smokescreen of ‘service’ becomes impossible. The community is and remains primary, the ‘servant’ acts on its behalf and in its name – and in accordance with the commission that s/he has been given.

The aim of this paper included making a contribution to understanding the interrelationship between institutions, gender and foundational narratives. In that connection, the following points can be noted. (1) In shaping the Markan leadership ethos and thus the community, *qua* institution as a whole, the appeal to part of the foundational narrative of the community is constitutive. Yet, this narrative as such also solves a problem related to gender and cultural credibility, given that it reinterprets an ‘effeminate’ and shameful death in terms of manly martyrdom. (2) The broader cultural context of the community predetermines a gendering of leadership as a hegemonically masculine role, yet the interplay between the community’s tradition and context and foundational narrative leads to a transformation as to what ‘hegemonic masculinity’ means in terms of exercising leadership. Leadership and masculinity are not abolished, but transformed. In doing so, the community creates its own space for constructing gender, in particular its own view of what ‘hegemonic masculinity’ amounts to. It may very well be that in this process, the foundational narrative, originally aiming at an apologetic reinterpretation of Jesus’ fate, as part of the canonical tradition of Markan community, is seen in a new – and striking – light. The outcome of it all, a new understanding of hegemonic masculinity and related kinds of leadership, is the product of the interaction of all three factors: the community and its structures in their cultural context, the notions of gender, and the foundational narrative of the community.

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63 See Greenleaf, *Leadership*.